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Note to Readers

The guidance in this issue is still applicable and useful in classifying positions in the Federal government. However, there may be references to names and addresses of organizations within the U.S. Office of Personnel Management that have changed, names of individuals no longer employed at the Office of Personnel Management, or documents such as the Federal Personnel Manual that no longer exist.

For the December 1997 HRCD-4 release, the Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs made minor, nonsubstantive edits to Digest issues 1 through 19. For example, acronyms and abbreviations were spelled out in many places, references to law and regulation were expanded, typographical errors were corrected, leading zeros were added to 3-digit series numbers, outdated prefaces have been deleted, and the issuance date were added to the header of each page. Because of the change from the original paper version to an electronic format, the page numbers in Digest issues 1 through 19 and other references, such as the General Schedule classification standards and Federal Wage System job grading standards, now available electronically may have changed. In issues 1 through 19, where there is a reference to a page, we either eliminated the page reference or updated the page number with the page number of the electronic version. Beginning with issue 20, pages references are to the electronic version only. Please note that pages numbers may change when a file is printed depending on the format and printer used.

The Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs is responsible for the content of the Digest. We be reached by telephone at 202-606-2990, by fax at 202-606-2663, or by email at ADOMSOE@OPM.GOV.

Digest issues are also available on the Office of Personnel Management's website and electronic bulletin board. The website address is <http://www.opm.gov> and the electronic bulletin board is OPM ONLINE. Using a modem, dial OPM ONLINE at 202-606-4800. Long distance telephone charges may apply.

Standards: Practical Nurse Series, GS-0620 (May 1983)
and Nurse Series, GS-0610 (June 1977)

Factor: Factor 2, Supervisory Controls

Issue: Modification of emergency treatment by
paramedic/Advanced Life Support
Technician, Level 2-2 vs. Level 2-3

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in the reconsideration of a classification appeal decision issued by the Office of Personnel Management. An Advanced Life Support Technician (ALST), GS-0640, position, had been downgraded due to crediting Factor Evaluation System Factor 2, Supervisory Controls, at Level 2-2 rather than Level 2-3. Level 2-2 had been assigned because it was believed that the established treatment protocols and assistance from an emergency room physician via radio communication precluded crediting the paramedic/ALST position at Level 2-3 of the GS-0620 standard which specifies that "without specific instruction for each patient's condition," the employee "modifies . . . care as conditions warrant." The appellant contended that he did modify treatment by moving from one treatment protocol to another on his own judgment. Thus, the Classification Appeals Office had to determine whether the judgment exercised by the appellant within the context of established treatment protocols and radio contact with a physician constituted sufficiently independent judgment to warrant credit at Level 2-3.

Resolution

In the absence of grade level criteria in the Health Aid and Technician Series, GS-0640, the Practical Nurse Series standard, GS-0620, was used because it came closest to meeting the criteria for selecting a standard as similar as possible to a subject position with respect to the kind of work performed, qualification requirements, level of difficulty and responsibility, and the combination of classification factors which have the greatest influence on the grade level.

The standard does not provide a specific example of modified care. However, two benchmark descriptions (6-1 and 6-2) credit Level 2-3 for nurses in a hospital setting for carrying out nursing care and handling problems and deviations independently "in accordance with previous training, instructions, policies, accepted nursing practices and the assigned patient care plans."

The Classification Appeals Office found that in an emergency situation, the appellant had to act quickly to evaluate the patient, determine what type of facility (e.g., nearest hospital, shock trauma, burn center, eye center) the patient should be sent to and in what type of conveyance (e.g., helicopter, emergency ambulance, routine ambulance), and determine the most appropriate

treatment approach or combination of approaches to deal with the patient's condition and provide emergency care. The appellant had available over 30 protocols that outline step-by-step treatment of the patient based on the specific symptoms exhibited by the patient. He memorized and had to follow them. However, he had to exercise judgment in selecting a protocol and modifying treatment by moving to another protocol based on the patient's response. Each protocol determines when a physician is called. The appellant first had to perform an initial patient assessment and administer certain emergency treatments before communication was established with the physician. The physician with whom he would consult by radio would be dependent on the appellant's onsite evaluation and description of the patient's condition, made in the absence of his supervisor, under emergency conditions, and without a specific plan developed for the care of the particular patient, as would be the case in a hospital. The appellant, unlike the practical nurse, had to assess the patient and determine which of more than 30 protocols to apply.

In addition to the GS-0620 benchmarks mentioned above, the Classification Appeals Office referred to Nurse Series, GS-0610, benchmarks, with due allowance for occupational differences, which reveal the description of a nurse who, "In emergency situations when a physician is not present or immediately available, initiates appropriate measures, for example, takes resuscitative measures in case of cardiac or respiration arrest." This example, (Benchmark 9-2) is assigned Level 2-3, partly because "[n]ursing procedures are carried out independently within the framework of established policy." In Benchmark 9-3, the nurse, among other duties, "[p]rovides emergency treatment, for example, to accident victims." Again, the nurse is assigned Level 2-3, in part due to responding "to emergencies in accordance with policy and accepted nursing practice without specific instructions." It is significant that the benchmark description specifies that the nurse "[w]orks under protocols of care that provide instructions for taking care of problems and patient needs during absence of physician." The following of these protocols is not considered sufficient to obviate crediting Level 2-3. It is also interesting to note that the GS-0610 standard provides as an illustration of Level 2-3, "[o]ccupational health nurses who work under the general direction of a nurse or physician who is either on the same premises or available for guidance by telephone." Again, the availability of higher level direction, by itself, is not a bar to assigning Level 2-3. Indeed, the GS-0621 Nursing Assistant Series also provides for Level 2-3 for carrying out patient care in accordance with treatment plans, patient charts, and instructions, and for modifying nursing care as conditions warrant, notwithstanding the lower levels of knowledge required and complexity of work covered by that series.

The Classification Appeals Office concluded that Level 2-3 was creditable, thereby restoring the appellant's grade level.

Standard: Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, Part I

Factor: Adjustment Factor No. 2

Issue: Supervision of a two-grade interval position
GS-0460

This article was deleted in August 1994 because of the issuance of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (TS-123, dated April 1993), which superseded the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, issued in January 1976 (TS-23) and the Draft Grade Evaluation Guide for White Collar Supervisors, issued in 1991.

Standard: Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide

Factor: Coverage, Part II

Issue: Counting Supporting Technicians GS-0460

This article was deleted in August 1994 because of the issuance of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (TS-123, dated April 1993), which superseded the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, issued in January 1976 (TS-23) and the Draft Grade Evaluation Guide for White Collar Supervisors, issued in 1991.

Standard: Aircraft Operation Series, GS-2181
(January 1988)

Factor: Nature and purpose of assignments

Issue: Maintenance test vs. flight test assignments

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's adjudication of a classification appeal. The appellant contended that his position should be classified as a Flight Test Pilot, GS-2181-13, rather than Maintenance Test Pilot, GS-2181-12, based on performance of functional flight tests on various rotary wing helicopters to determine their airworthiness following approved maintenance or modifications. The appellant noted that the depot installing modifications had no flight testing program and that he performed the flight test on these modified aircraft. The Office of Personnel Management had to determine whether the performance of such flight tests justified the requested title and grade.

Resolution

Flight Test Pilots are primarily involved in rigorous flight testing of the handling characteristics and performance of developmental or substantially modified aircraft to determine airworthiness. Substantial modifications are those which are significant enough to influence the flight characteristics of the aircraft to a pronounced degree.

Maintenance Test Pilots are primarily involved in functional flight tests of aircraft after repair or replacement of worn or damaged components or the addition of approved modifications. Approved modifications are those which have been developed and flight tested on initial aircraft prior to being incorporated into the aircraft being tested.

Flight test assignments at the GS-13 level require evaluation of aircraft operational procedures and mechanical deficiencies to recommend a new procedure or corrective action. Such assignments serve to determine aircraft performance and flight characteristics under critical flight conditions after substantial modifications. These activities develop the "approved" modifications which are then installed and subsequently tested on the additional identical aircraft by GS-12 Maintenance Test Pilots.

The Office of Personnel Management concluded that the appellant's testing of aircraft after approved modifications were made met the criteria for Maintenance Test Pilot, GS-2181-12.

Standard: Medical Technologist, GS-0644

Factor: Exclusions

Issue: Selection of a series for classification of cytotechnology and histotechnology positions

Identification of the Classification Issue

For a number of years, some cytotechnologist and histotechnologist positions were classified in the Medical Technologist Series, GS-0644, as "professional medical technologist positions specializing in cytology or histology work." They were excluded from that series when the Office of Personnel Management published updated classification and qualification standards for medical technologist positions in 1983. The study indicated that these positions had different duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements, and different curricula.

The current Medical Technologist classification standard excludes positions (other than medical technologists) that primarily require the application of professional knowledge and skill in an allied health field (p.4, exclusion 6). Such positions, when they are not appropriately classifiable in any other existing series, are classified in the General Health Series, GS-0601. Because the exclusion does not mention specific allied health fields, however, it may not be clear to everyone what positions are covered.

Resolution

The intent of exclusion 6 was that cytotechnologist, histotechnologist, nuclear medicine technologist, and other non-medical technologist allied health positions belong in the GS-0601 series *when performance of the work requires the application of professional knowledge and skill*. In other words, under current Office of Personnel Management standards and exclusions 3 and 6 of the Medical Technologist standard, cytotechnology and histotechnology positions should be classified in the Pathology Technician Series, GS-0646, or, if they require the application of professional knowledge and skill, in the General Health Science Series, GS-0601. Pages 5 through 8 of the Medical Technologist standard provide a discussion of the distinguishing characteristics of professional technologist and supporting technician work.

Standards: Laundry Worker, WG-7304
(September 1968) and

Materials Handler, WG-6907
(September 1990)

Factor: Series selection

Issue: Intended use of Laundry Worker vs.
Materials Handler Series

Identification of the Classification Issue

The issue arose in the adjudication of an appeal from a wage grade supervisor of the linen control and repair section of a military hospital. The section was responsible for receiving and sorting linen, transporting linen to and from the post laundry, assuring the availability of an adequate supply of linen, and issuing the linen. The appellant supervised five Materials Handlers, two Motor Vehicle Operators, and one Fabric Worker. The Office of Personnel Management region had decided that the positions of the Materials Handlers and the supervisor should be classified in the Laundry Worker Series, WG-7304, rather than the Materials Handler Series, WG-6907. The request to the Classification Appeals Office for reconsideration of the Region's decision was based, in part, on the exclusion stated in the Laundry Worker standard which indicates that duties such as collecting and transporting soiled linen to the laundry or distributing clean linen to hospital wards are graded by standards for that type of work, e.g., Motor Vehicle Operator, WG-5703; Janitor, WG-3566. The agency and the appellant believed that the duties involving receiving, storing, and distributing linen made the Materials Handler Series, WG-6907, more appropriate.

Resolution

The Classification Appeals Office noted that two positions had been authorized as Motor Vehicle Operators in recognition of the primacy of the vehicle driving duties in those positions. Thus, the agency had, in effect, recognized that the work of the five subordinates performing the primary functions of the section was not the physical movement of laundry. While the workers in question did move linen carts to and from hospital wards, it represented only one aspect of their duties and did not relate to the knowledges, skills, and abilities required to weigh linen carts and record the weights; sort dirty linen into bundles of like items and sort clean laundry for size; sort, fold, and wrap for sterilization; etc. Reference to Definitions of Trades and Labor Job Families and Occupations, Appendix B, TS 38, October 1979, revealed that the definition of the WG-7304 Laundry Worker Series encompasses the former U.S. Civil Service Commission's Handbook definitions for WG-7302, 7303, 7304, and 7353. WG-7302 referred to laundry working, classifying, and sorting; WG-7303 referred to laundry receiving and shipping; and WG-7353

referred to marking, sorting, and checking. Accordingly, the WG-7304 Series appropriately covers the primary work of the positions used as the basis for determining the series and grade of the appellant's position.

The positions classified as Materials Handlers were dealing with a relatively small number of visually identifiable items which were referenced by name and did not involve the more complex procedures for storing, consideration of stock numbers and/or codes, and matching specific items with various supply documents as described in the Materials Handler standard. The duties, which included weighing and recording the weight of dirty and clean laundry; sorting, counting, and bundling like items; folding and bundling rough-dried baby items for sterilization; and weighing, filling to listed stock levels and reweighing the linen exchange carts were best represented by the WG-7304 Series which in its definition lists receiving, sorting, and marking soiled linen and apparel; processing flatwork and roughdry items; assembling, wrapping, and issuing clean laundry. Therefore, the Region's decision to change the classification of the supervisor's position and the five Materials Handler positions to the Laundry Worker Series was affirmed.

Standard: Boiler Plant Operator, WG-5402
(March 1991)

Factor: Special Additional Responsibilities

Issue: Crediting of shift responsibilities

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's consideration of an appeal concerning a Boiler Plant Operator position which an agency had downgraded from WG-5402-10 to WG-5402-9. The primary reason for the downgrade was the removal of shift responsibilities from the position. For the majority of his time, the appellant was typically the only operator in an oil operated heating plant. He reported to another employee who operated a plant three blocks away. That employee was not allowed to leave his post to provide on-the-job assistance.

The Office of Personnel Management had to determine whether this degree of responsibility and freedom from supervision warranted an extra grade for shift responsibilities.

Resolution

Under the standard, when shift operators are required to perform additional duties which are more responsible and require more skill and knowledge than those of an operator who is on duty where a supervisor is available to provide guidance and assistance, one additional grade may be added to the job. As found in the standard, these operators may be *in charge* of the complete plant operation and typically must rely on their own judgment to handle any problems that may arise. (Emphasis added.) For example, the shift operator must have knowledge of the entire system in order to locate problems and independently determine action necessary to maintain adequate steam production. In the event of a breakdown or malfunction of equipment, the shift operator is responsible for taking appropriate action.

The Office of Personnel Management reasoned that, even though the appellant's supervisor was typically not present for most of the hours of the evening and night shifts and never during the weekend shifts, the appellant could contact the senior operator by phone for advice and assistance. While the senior operator could not leave his post to provide direct advice and assistance, he could provide advice by phone, call the supervisor at home for assistance, contact the military duty officer for assistance, and contact a roving mechanic who could be onsite within minutes. The appellant was also required to call the senior operator at least once every two hours for safety purposes. At that time, he could report any problems that he was having or problems that he expected.

For those reasons, the Office of Personnel Management found that the appellant's job did not function with the degree of responsibility and independence that warranted an additional grade even though he was typically the only operator at that plant. Consequently, the operator duties were properly classified at the WG-9 grade level.